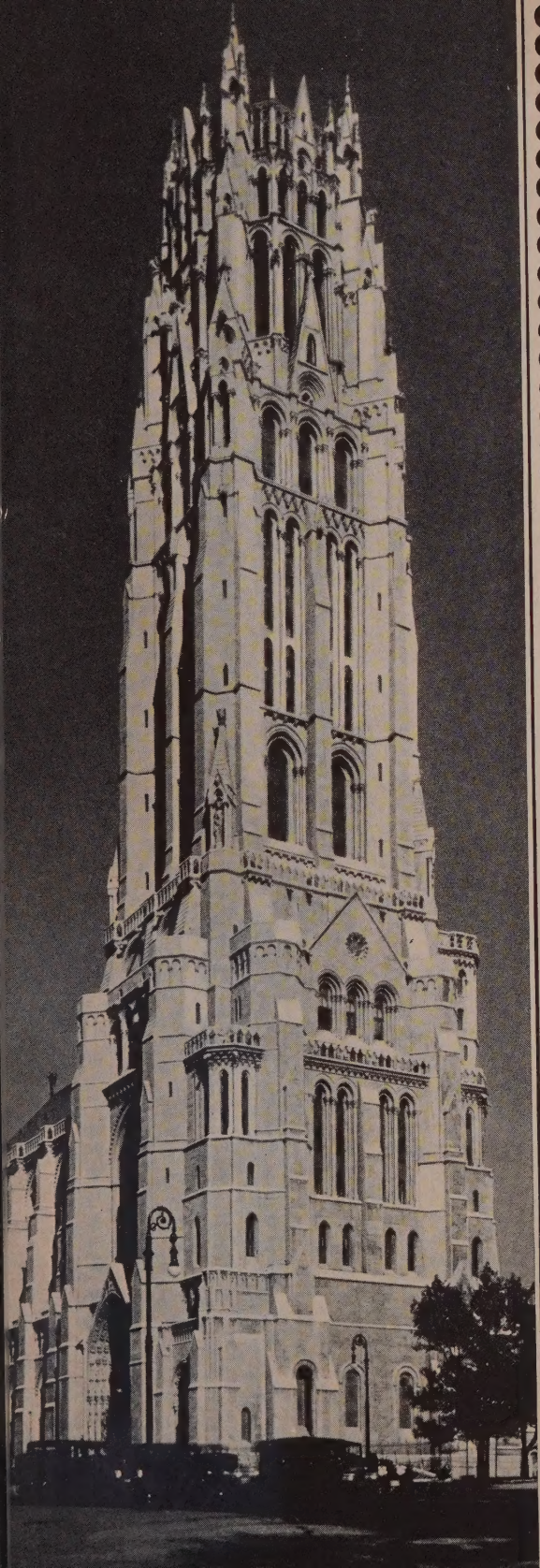

The Church Monthly

JUNE, 1935

How Much Do We Want Liberty?

The Latchstring

"On Relief"

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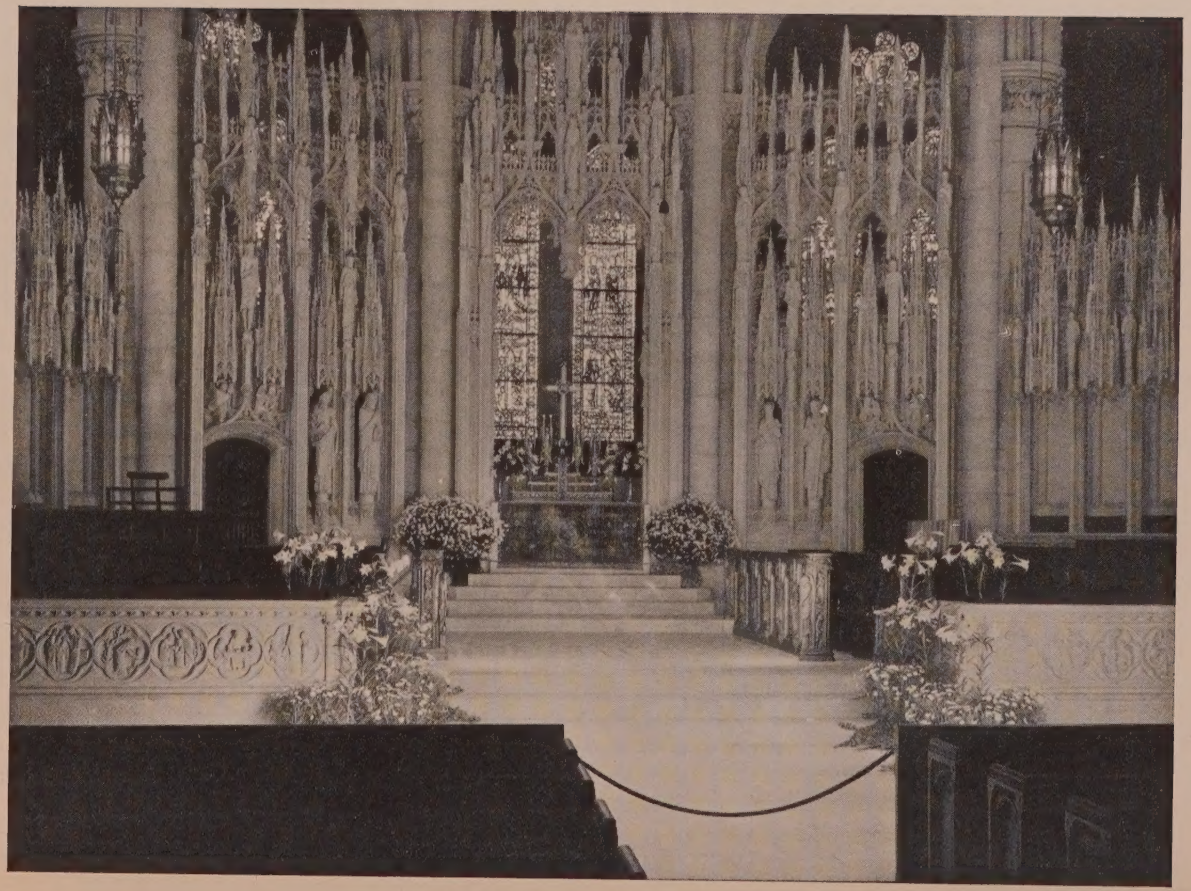


THE CHANCEL ON EASTER MORNING

How Much Do We Want Liberty?

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Tossed to and fro in current discussion, few words appear oftener than 'liberty.' Some voices cry it down as a false god that has betrayed us and must now be dethroned in favor of a coerced collective life. Some cry it up as a priceless treasure for whose possession we might well sacrifice anything beside. And as one listens to the confused debate, the query continually rises, What do we really mean by 'liberty'?

To be sure, were we asked whether in general we believe in liberty and want it, we would answer with a confident affirmative. We would do that as citizens, for if this country is to make any distinctive contribution to the world's life, it will be as a social experiment motived by what Lincoln called "the spirit which prizes liberty." And we would do that as Christians, too, for we recall that the first disciples went out into the Roman world, crying with Paul, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." As citizens and Christians, who here would not say that of course we believe in liberty and want it?

Many of us, however, are tempted to say that far too easily. A young American arrived once in Zermatt, Switzerland, and, seeing the towering peak of the Matterhorn, asked, "What's the name of that big rock?" When told that it was one of the most famous of the Alpine summits, he said, "Do you think I could get up there this afternoon?" Little he knew the story of that peak's costly conquest, of the lives that it had taken, of the hazards still involved in its ascent. So is liberty a majestic mountain peak. How much do we really want it?

To begin at the beginning, do we want liberty enough to fulfil the primary conditions for being liberated personalities ourselves? We all know the kind of person Whittier referred to whose "dreary selfishness" becomes "the prison of a soul." And we know other persons who have escaped this interior imprisonment into liberated lives. They are getting out of themselves all there is in them. They are released personalities with all their powers aflame. Obviously such liberty is not to be possessed by merely claiming it; it is one of the supreme achievements of the soul. How much do we want it?

When Paul, for example, said, "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty," what did he mean? The religious system in which he had been reared had largely surrendered to legalism. Prohibitions, taboos, restrictions, observances—these irked Paul's restive spirit and he wanted precisely what vigorous modern people want, emancipation. The secret of an emancipated life was the object of Paul's quest. Only, as most moderns would think, he looked for it in a strange place. He found Christ—or, better say, Christ found him. Christ took possession of his life. Paul was more mastered than he had ever been in his experience before. He even called himself a bond-servant of Christ. So, some one says,

he fell from one imprisonment into another! To say that, however, betrays ignorance not only of Paul but of the basic laws of man's psychology. Do we really think that in total effect Colonel Lindbergh is enslaved by aviation and that Fritz Kreisler is the prisoner of music? Strange—is it not?—that it is only the things which thus capture us that can release us and call all our originality and independence into play. So Christ brought to Paul a cause gloriously worth living for and therefore gloriously liberating, which set him free, all his inward doors wide open, all the metal in him coined for currency.

The other day I heard Toscanini conduct a Brahms symphony. He had in his hands that day the keys to the gates of beauty and enjoyed the freedom of the twelve-doored city. No looseness had wrought that miracle of emancipation, all his powers expanded and released. He was mastered by something which for many years he had counted it his glory to be mastered by. Here, then, is a profound paradox of the spiritual life: only those things which take possession of us can release us; it is our voluntarily chosen loyalties which liberate us; we are set free only when we are mastered by something we think it worth while being mastered by. But that is a tremendous experience. It goes deep; it reaches high. How much do we want it?

Let us go on to ask a further question. Do we want liberty enough to seek it in those areas where it is most indispensable and correspondingly difficult to get?

What would you say are the areas of life where liberty is so absolutely indispensable that if we lose it we lose everything? For one thing, liberty is indispensable in thinking. Coerced thought is not really thought. Coerced scientific research is not scientific research. In Hitler's Germany, where no anthropologist would be allowed to proclaim a pro-Semitic conclusion, or in Russia, where no economist could combat Stalin's type of communism—that is, wherever scientific thinking is externally compelled to foregone conclusions—it is not scientific thinking any more. Liberty is the essence of the business.

So coerced religion is not religion, for the genius of religion is personal conviction and experience, and that much of religion which is not voluntary is not real. Hence the folly of all religious persecution, as though Christian faith and life were something which, for fear or force, one could fudge his sums about and come to foregone conclusions on because he is compelled to. Liberty is the essence of the matter.

One discovers, therefore, that in these interior spiritual realms freedom is always indispensable. Coercion in art destroys art itself, for the essence of art is interior creativity; and a coerced conscience is no longer a conscience, since the genius of conscientiousness is personal conviction about right. You see, then, that we can endure, as we do, many external political and economic regimentations without feeling too badly our loss of freedom, but in such spiritual realms as these to lose liberty is to lose everything.

Now, I appeal to you. In these realms—freedom to think for oneself, to be Christian for oneself, to love what is lovely and choose what is right for oneself—we are not in this country noticeably inhibited by external regimentations. No, we are not. We lose liberty in these realms because we inwardly surrender to the most dangerous foes of freedom in the land: the tre-

mendous pressures of popular custom, conformity, and standardization. How much do we want liberty from them?

Sir Isaac Newton, having discovered the law of gravitation and written the *Principia,* ceased his absorption in scientific pursuits and in later years accepted appointment as Warden of the English Mint. His era was a time of almost universal political corruption and one day Newton himself was approached by a man with a bribe of £6000, a tidy sum in those days, asking for a personal favor. When Newton refused, the briber announced that he represented a duchess, a powerful figure in England, and this is what Sir Isaac Newton said: "I desire you to tell the lady, that if she was here herself, and had made me this offer, I would have desired her to go out of my house; and so I desire you, or you shall be turned out." So! Newton, discoverer of the law of gravitation I admire, but sometimes I think I salute more highly still Newton, gentleman of honor, with a conscience free from the terrific pressures of his day.

Without such freedom of soul from submergence in the crowd, there is no liberty worthy of the name. How we mangle great words! What toboggan slides the tongues of men are, down which noble phrases slip into ignoble meanings! When one observes the great mass of so-called emancipated people in this land, one is filled with derision. They are as alike as peas in a pod; there is no individuality about them. They look alike, think alike, talk alike, act alike. They are all cut from the same mental and moral pattern. Read the advertisements in a popular magazine and you see everything of importance there is to see concerning them. They are not free from the most serious enemy of liberty we daily face—the pressure of conformity. And it costs to be free of that. How much do we want liberty?

Let us ask now another question. Do we want liberty enough to defend it in the world at large and in this nation against those who too readily are surrendering it? For while it is true, as we have said, that the deep fountains of freedom are within the soul, we are so far on in history that long since freedom has flowed out of men's souls into their social institutions. First in the historic process came free personalities who had discovered the meaning of a liberated life, and then came their instinctive, indignant resentment against social oppressions—legal, political, economic—which handicapped and hindered others in discovering this release.

During the long fight for liberty in our Western tradition, this motive, the emancipation of man's spirit, has been at the center. It is as though men were saying, We want to be and we want our brothers to be emancipated persons, and in society are terrific oppressions which imprison the personalities of men; open the doors, down with the Bastilles, clear the road for the freedom of the people! So the men of the Renaissance declared their independence of the enslavements of medievalism. So the men of the Reformation won their release from the intellectual and practical oppressions of the Vatican. So the men of the French and English revolutions enlarged the sphere of popular right at the expense of royal right. And so in this country, under Washington and Lincoln and their compeers, we have made an incalculable contribution to the liberal tradition. Let no one belittle that high heritage because it is partial and incomplete. It still remains

one of the noblest achievements of man's spirit.

And now, around the world, that liberal tradition is in peril. As a communist, Lenin regards democracy as a mere bourgeois superstition. Speaking for fascism, Mussolini scorns what he calls "the more or less putrescent corpse of the goddess of liberty." And in this country one does not need to listen long to hear people suggesting the short-cuts to swift ends which one finds when one brushes liberty aside and tries coercion.

If some impatient radical is here today, so tempted, I beg of you at least to read again the life of Robespierre. Early in the French Revolution Robespierre, who was one of the honestest men that ever lived, made a stirring speech in favor of the freedom of the press, claiming for all the right to publish what they genuinely thought. But two years afterward, when Robespierre was at the height of his power, when his policies were being attacked by the press, when it would be easier and quicker to get done what he wanted done if only he could be free of this irksome liberty he lately had supported, he wrote in his notebook, "Repress these journalistic impostors, and circulate good articles." So always in a difficult and troubled time the temptation to override liberty in the interests of coercion is terrific. But still that figure of Robespierre, with his progressive deterioration of character when he did it and his ultimate catastrophe, is historically typical.

Do not misunderstand this. If I am addressing myself now especially to the radicals, I shall in a minute be addressing myself especially to the reactionaries. As for the radicals, I should say this: You have made a strange change of front. Throughout all the noblest areas of our Western tradition, every person who could call himself a liberal, a progressive, a radical, has fought for liberty, and now, under the egis of communistic collectivism, many of you are surrendering liberty. Friends, you will yet wake up to discover that you are playing off side.

To be sure, any thoughtful man can understand and should sympathize with what Russian communism, with all its coercions, is ultimately driving at. What the communists want more than anything beside is economic equality, and society will never rest until it gets a far higher degree of that than we have now. So, wanting above all else economic equality, communism rightly sees that men are so unequally endowed by nature that, if you grant them laissez faire freedom to fight it out among themselves, the result will be, as it has been, every kind of inequality there is. Therefore, the basic strategy of communism is to sacrifice liberty for the sake of equality, whereas the basic strategy of capitalism has been to sacrifice equality for the sake of liberty. What painful dilemmas life confronts us with!

Now, granting that in any society one of the most puzzling and unescapable problems is somehow to strike a fair balance between these two, I propose for our country, with our traditions, a test for our public policies. We shall surely have more collectivism. Wide-spread machine processes, weaving us together, force us willy-nilly to increased social planning and control. But I propose this standard for all of it: only that much collectivism and that kind of it whose total effect is to increase liberty.

Why is it in this city that we readily submit to traffic regulations? Because

the total effect is to increase our liberty. To be sure, regarded in detail, they mean the abridgment of our laissez faire freedom to do anything we please, but the total effect is to release our freedom. Without traffic regulations, it would take us all day to go downtown, but with them we are free to go downtown with fair speed. And because that is what we want, we submit to the necessary social planning.

Were I to say one thing especially to you as fellow citizens, it would be this: keep your eyes on that test. We have in this country too priceless a tradition, a heritage with which a country like Russia never has been trusted, to surrender it lightly because in this war-shaken world the trend is toward new forms of old tyrannies. Keep your eyes on that test: no more collectivism than increases liberty. It may not always be easy to be sure. In this case or in that, we may differ about the total effect of a policy. But, as a whole, this nation cannot go far wrong if we watch whatever goes on with that test in mind: anything whose total effect enlarges the freedom of the people is right; anything that destroys it is, in the land of Washington and Lincoln, wrong.

If, however, this test is to be safe, we must ask one more question, this one addressed to the conservative mind, as the last was to the radical. Do we want liberty enough to keep rethinking its meaning in terms of the new forms which it must take in a new generation? The most serious enemy of any living thing is commonly not its aggressive foes but its reactionary friends who stubbornly cling to its obsolete formulations. That is true of religion. If Christianity did not have so many friends who insist on its antiquated forms, Christianity could deal much better with its aggressive enemies. Now, liberty is a living thing that passes from one incarnation to another.

In New York City, for example, a man who tried to provide the family drinking water from a well in his yard, even though he had a yard, would get into trouble with the city authorities. Once for a man to be denied the right of a well on his own property would have been an intolerable invasion of freedom but, strangely enough, we do not feel ourselves wronged. Through collective action we now have liberty to turn a faucet on and we like that better. That is to say, in that realm liberty has changed its form.

Few things are more important than the recognition of this fact that liberty, being a living thing, keeps running into new expressions so that we must continually rethink it. In consequence, the most serious enemies of liberty in this country are not the communists. American communists are only a handful anyway, divided into three organized political parties that hate each other vehemently. American communists are about the least communal group in the country. Far more serious in their antagonism to liberty are the reactionary friends of liberty who keep pleading for its outgrown shells and defending its abandoned forts.

A laissez faire economy, for example —every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—is as obsolete a kind of liberty as wells in the yards of a metropolis or a city's streets without traffic regulations. Once the principle of laissez faire was liberating; it worked a magnificent emancipation for the mercantile and industrial classes against the oppressions of a land-holding aristocracy. It is a tragic sight, however, to see the loyal friends of liberty, having

in one generation won a victory for their cause with weapons suited to their time, now in a later generation insisting on fighting their battle with the same weapons, forgetting that they are in another age, which has made those instruments as obsolete as bows and arrows at Verdun. So to us privileged people, whose natural interests are not with revolution but with the status quo, not in the least tempted, therefore, to be radical, tempted perhaps to be reactionary, I propose another test of judgment for our public policies. When we talk about liberty, what is it that we really are wanting to be free from?

Try with me to answer that, not simply as citizens but as Christians. Suppose we say that when as Christian citizens we talk of liberty we are hoping that the whole nation, the entire body of the people, may somehow be freed from those appalling social and economic inequalities which make a united, fortunate, and powerful national life impossible. For there are extremes that every parish minister upon his rounds must daily come upon, as though he passed from the holy city, Jerusalem, upon its noble hills, to the stench and sterility of the Dead Sea, 1300 feet below sea-level. If, as Jesus said, personality is sacred everywhere, there is something deeply wrong with a society which produces such cruel contrasts of privilege and underprivilege. We blame the radicals because they turn to coercion. What they say is, There is coercion now, terrific coercion in our society, that presses men down and will not let them up.

Suppose, then, we say as Christian citizens that when we talk of liberty we mean that the whole nation must be freed *from* such inequality, that it may be freed *for* a united, powerful, national life. Friends, if that is what we mean by liberty, then the achievement of it will mean the abridgment of our smaller, laissez faire, individual freedoms, just as our total liberty on the streets means that. I lay this matter on my conscience and on yours. Do we mean by liberty simply that as individuals or as a privileged class we want to escape all the infringements on our private whims we can be rid of or do we mean that we want the whole body of the nation to be emancipated from the common ills that weigh upon us all? Our ultimate liberty is simply our freedom to choose the kind of social structure that best will open doors of opportunity to all the people.

If some one rightly notes in this the demand for profound social change devoutly longed and prayed for, I rise to defend that in the name of patriotism. For this thing we are pleading for is patriotism, the only spiritually significant kind of patriotism that exists. To love one's people and want them all set free is patriotism. There is altogether too little of it in this country, for all our talk. Enough and to spare of individual and class loyalty! Enough and to spare of perverted nationalisms that plunge the nations into suicidal war! Far too much patriotism of a type which, brought into a sanctuary such as this, before the high altar of the one God and Father of mankind, is sacrilege! But to love one's people, to be devoted to their great traditions, to be glad to sacrifice the lesser, lower freedoms of individual and class for the larger freedom of the whole—that is Christian patriotism. For it is as true of societies as souls that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon February 24, 1935.

Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal Spirit, Who dwellest in light unapproachable but also in the hearts of those that are humble and contrite, we worship Thee. Depth beyond depth in Thy profundity our plummets cannot fathom. Height beyond height in Thine altitudes our imaginations cannot scale. No man by searching can find Thee out. Yet Thou hast given us light enough to walk by. Thanks be to Thee for high thoughts and clear insights, for beauty and truth and goodness shining on us from great lives. Forgive our cries for more light when we have not used the light we have. Grant especially that today we may see again Thy glory in the face of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and in his footsteps may walk.

Play upon all the varied chords of our lives to bring out our best. Play upon our gratitude. If we have forgotten blessings whose remembrance would encourage, expand, and liberate us, bring them to our reminiscence, we beseech Thee. Our friends and homes, great music and great art, the beauty of nature, and every lovely stimulus to elevated faith and living—recall them to us, that, so remembering the benedictions we should be thankful for, gratitude may sing within our lives again.

Play upon our consciences. Grant that secret evils we have been afraid to look at with honest eyes may by our candid thought today be brought into the open. Let the clear winds of God blow through us, winds keen with chastening and healing with pardon that we may go out free from the obsession of our unforgiven sins.

Play upon our courage. If we have surrendered ourselves to complaining, lift us out of the swamps of confusion and self-pity to an altitude where the courage and fortitude of our forefathers at their best may take possession of us. We live in troubled times, our lives often hard bestead; let faith take the place of fear and bravery rise above weakness in our souls today.

Play upon our goodwill. Expand our sympathies. Override our mean vindictiveness, and grant that some hearts may be enlarged today with the love of God poured forth in us and overflowing into the love of men.

As thus for ourselves we pray, it is not for ourselves alone. We would make the most of our best for the sake of others. The world lies upon our hearts, its far-flung problems, its deep social needs. Build in us personality measured to the greatness of this time, O Spirit of God. Wherever men today lift ladders of prayer down which Thou canst come to their illumination and their empowerment, there minister strength to the characters of Thy people. Save us from the threat of war. Save us from the divisions of race prejudice. Save us from the inequalities of our economic life. And grant that, as thus we pray, our spirits may be fitted to pray because we are of that quality which helps to build the better day we ask for.

(*Continued on page 163*)

The Latchstring

In these columns we propose to let our readers share an experience which members of the staff and officers of organizations have had in connection with the recent illness of Dr. Fosdick.

There lies before the writer a leather-bound loose-leaf scrapbook of forty-four pages that went to the hospital, day by day and page by page, during the time that our minister was under treatment there. The various excerpts and illustrations are but a suggestion of the communications which were handed in by the different organizations. Everybody collaborated in the preparation of this book wholeheartedly and with rare originality. Designed primarily to bring some lightness and cheer to the sick room there nevertheless crept into the letters and posters over and over again expressions of deep and abiding appreciation of the ministry to which Dr. Fosdick has given himself so completely in these past nine years in this church. The scrapbook will now become a prized permanent possession of Dr. Fosdick but before it has left our hands for good we have taken the liberty to cull material which we are passing on to our readers. We have taken here and there from the book such items as could be more readily used for illustrative purposes, without any attempt to indicate what individuals and organizations had a hand in this cooperative tribute.

CURRENT HISTORY OF THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

(Hospital Edition)

The members of the staff of The Riverside Church, finding themselves suddenly, though temporarily, deprived of the suggestive and stimulating leadership of their pastor, have an unwonted amount of time on their hands, and propose to take up a matter which they have long hoped to do but for which they, like many would-be authors, have not previously found the requisite leisure. We are going about the writing of a book. We herewith present to Dr. Fosdick in his hide-out in the Presbyterian Hospital the cover and this very inadequate foreword and title page.

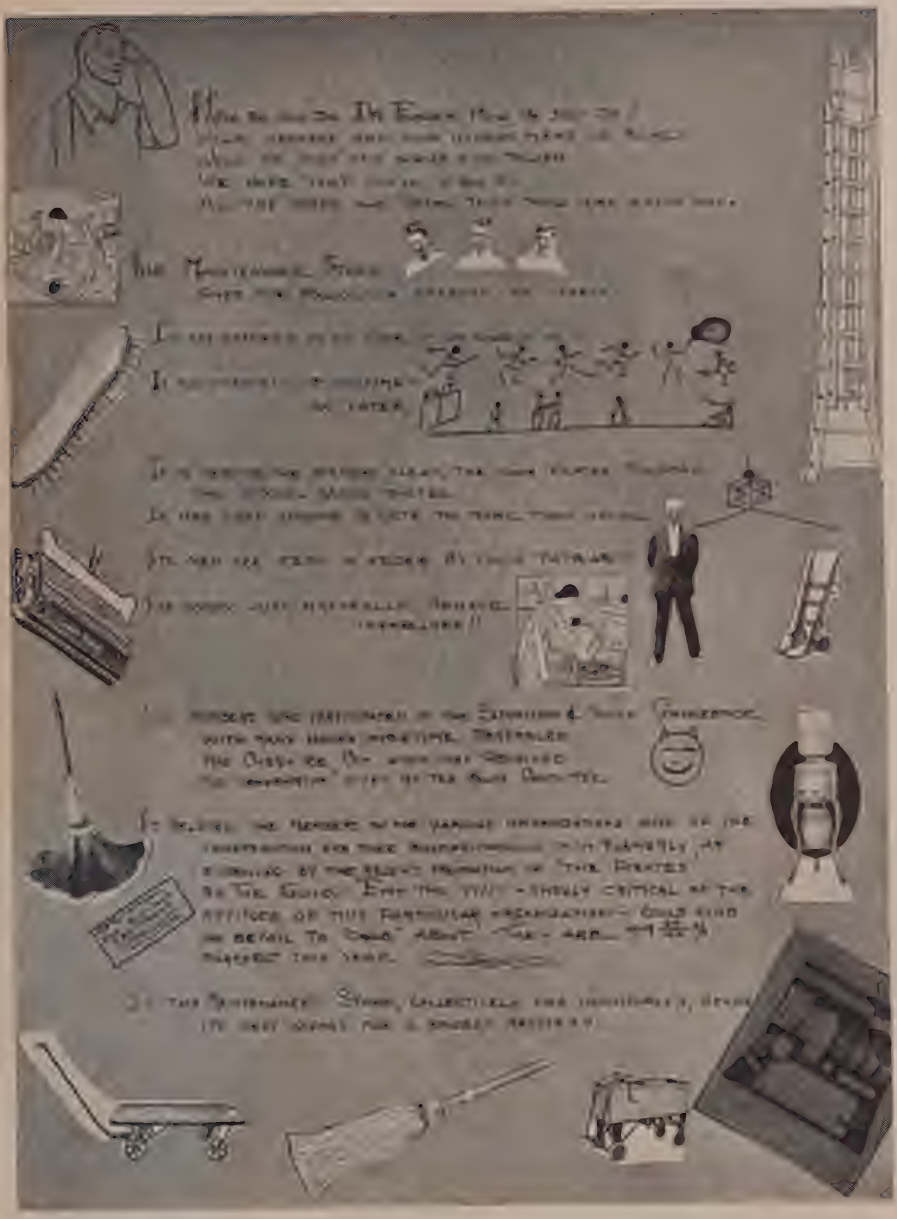
We present the binding first because we have a feeling that most books are so conceived. The author sees a binding reposing on the bookshelf with his name on the cover and realizes that it would indeed garnish all literature if such a book could be brought to pass. We are therefore simply following the traditional procedure in presenting first the all-leather binding. We hope he will like its dress and cover, for that is what one sees most of in any book and in the prospective contemplation of which most books are born.

This edition is to be of composite character. The collaborators will include the members of the staff who will depend upon the brains and ingenuity of their respective secretaries to furnish the material. Some of the church officers and leaders in various organizations will dip in their pens from time to time.

At least, as the Chief of all Chiefs reads these pages, he will be assured that the staff is busy, very busy, thinking up things to tell him and thus while away *his* time—and theirs.

OUR CARILLONNEUR, KAMIEL LEFÉVERE, EXPRESSED HIMSELF IN THE ACCOMPANYING CARTOON. GLOOM HAS ENCIRCLED THE CHURCH AND TOWER BUT THE SUN IS SHINING BRIGHTLY ON THE MEDICAL CENTER JUST NORTH OF THE BUILDING TO WHICH DR. FOSDICK HAD RECENTLY GONE

THE THOUGHT OF CHILDREN AT PLAY WAS WELL CALCULATED TO CARRY CHEER TO THE HOSPITAL ROOM



ETCHING, BY ROBERT BIEDERMAN, A STUDENT IN THE CLASS IN ETCHING, WHO SAYS:

"I FEEL GRATEFUL TO THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH FOR THE HOURS OF JOYFUL CREATIVE WORK IN THE 'ARTS AND CRAFTS SHOP.'"

This from the Epicures, an informal social group in the Church:

Dear Dr. Fosdick:

We jest dropped in to say "Hello." We guessed it must be powerful slow and teedjus lyin' on a couch with no diversion but a grouch. And—gracious sakes! How well ye look! That operation must 'a took! Ye've got more color than ye should, considerin' all ye've gone and stood. Mebbe ye think it's kind 'a funny, me buttin' in the ceremony. I'm Myry Vance's country cousin, come here with a couple 'a dozen Epycures to say "God Bless ye" and hope our visit won't distress ye. Them Epycures have picked on me to speak our love and sympathy. (Guess they like my seedy way of sayin' what I got to say; folks' tastes differ, ye'll allow, as the lady said as she kissed the cow.)

Well anyhow and anyway, be that contention as it may, one thing's absolutely sure—that each and every Epycure here present will at once agree: we wish you health and jollity! No matter how ye turn it around, that doctrine stands four-square and sound! Now some there be as will contend we ought to pause and gravely blend with our visit's levity reflections on life's brevity; Some note of warnin' to remind us that what's before us ain't behind us. Well mebbe, yet it seems to me we Epycures should feel quite free to exercise our harmless capers without injectin' blues and vapors; and to have our little fling of laughter free from fears of a grim hereafter. Now I make no flippant plea for a life of sheer frivolity. I know there's dismal vales of tears as well as sun-lit hills in the year of life; there's bitter mixed with sweet to make our pilgrimage complete; gloom enough when one looks

about to write great big fat books about; that life's misfortunes, woes and breaks ain't all sausage and griddle cakes. Occasions come when thoughts like these should occupy our faculties. There's a time and place when them things fit, but this here time and place ain't it. Our mission is in comin' here to bring a bit of harmless cheer, and leave it to them that's trained for sich functions to pour on sanctimonious unctions. (*—And so on in the same style for six full pages*)

These photographs, taken by The Board of Ushers, helped to cheer Dr. Fosdick with the realization that the people were carrying on at the church during his absence.

CONGREGATION LEAVING THE CHURCH ON EASTER MORNING

The following editorial in *The Christian Century* for May 15th adds high significance to the peace meeting held in The Riverside Church on the evening of May 2nd.

"The most meaningful meeting held in the United States for a year past was held in The Riverside Church, New York, on the night before the American fleet sailed for its war maneuvers in the north Pacific. More than two hundred ministers and rabbis, together with a congregation of about eight hundred laymen, gathered to renew and to make explicit the solemn consecration of their lives to peace. Marching in a processional before which were borne, perhaps for the first time in a common religious ceremony, the three symbols of the tablets of the law, the star of David and the cross of Christ, these Jewish and Protestant ministers passed into a deeply moving service which reached its climax in the common swearing of this Covenant of Peace:

> In loyalty to God I believe that the way of true religion cannot be reconciled with the way of war. In loyalty to my country I support its adoption of the Kellogg-Briand pact which renounces war. In the spirit of true patriotism and with deep personal conviction, I therefore renounce war and never will I support another.

It has been frequently charged that, under stress, the pacifism which the churches have manifested in recent years of disillusion would quickly evaporate, and that the ministry would revert to the same sort of war propaganda which it spread twenty years ago. The final test of that belief has not yet come. But it is plain that, as the government's drift toward militarism grows stronger, it is having the effect of consolidating and stiffening the allegiance of the ministry to peace. Gentlemen at Washington will be well advised to take careful heed of what happened at The Riverside Church. It is no light matter when such a group takes such a pledge 'in loyalty to God.'"

▽

Dr. Frederick W. Norwood, who is coming to America this summer to take Dr. Fosdick's place in the pulpit of The Riverside Church during the sessions of the Summer School on the Sundays of July 14th to August 11th, inclusive, has recently been elected as President of the National Council of the Evangelical Free Churches of Great Britain.

We take this opportunity of congratulating Dr. Norwood on his assumption of this high office which has been filled by a number of the most distinguished men in the religious life of Great Britain. The congregations which have waited upon Dr. Norwood's ministry in New York in other years

(*Continued on page 163*)

"On Relief"

A Neighbor of The Riverside Church Tells How It Feels

TODAY we hear so much the term "relief families." What are they like . . . who are they . . . what are their attitudes about receiving relief?

The Riverside Church works in co-operation with The Charity Organization Society to help many families find work and ways out of trouble so they may again direct their own lives. Perhaps the story of one of your neighbors "on relief," therefore, will be of especial interest. It concerns Mrs. Nolan.

"I hate to come here . . . people should be independent . . . manage somehow . . . but this time the spirit has gone out of me . . . I can't think of any other way."

The young woman, Mrs. Nolan,* looked with troubled inquiry at the C.O.S. worker.

"Often things do get too much for us," the worker said, "and there seems no way out for the moment. Would you like to tell me about it?"

Mrs. Nolan settled herself a little more comfortably in her chair without taking her eyes from her listener's face.

"I don't know where to begin," she said. "I should start with when my husband lost his job and explain about how we have to have money for food, but I can't do that until I tell you how I feel about coming here. I hate it—it does something to people. You see, my father died when I was two years old. My mother put me in a . . . . . home. She did not love me, you know—she never has. I don't know why God lets some women have children. . . . Everything was lovely in the Home—the sisters were kind to me. There was a garden, flowers and music—prayers, and at night when I went to bed always the feeling that Jesus was watching over me. . . . Then when I was thirteen my mother took me out of the Home. She tucked up my hair to make me look older and put me to work in a factory. At Christmas and Thanksgiving she'd send me out to get baskets where they were giving them to the poor—I hated it—even then I'd look at the people and think—there's something wrong about this. Some of the people I could tell had to come—they were thin and hungry and their faces wore the feeling that I had right down in my heart. Others did not mind—which seemed even worse to me.

"Last week"—the words came tumbling on without a pause—"I injured my arm pulling up the dumb-waiter—the cord broke. You see I have a janitorship and earn our rent. I was happy when I got it—I thought now I will save $25 a month and we'll have enough to buy the children good clothes this year—clothes that will last. You see I have five kids—they are wonderful children. I'd like to tell you about them later." For a moment the tense expression left the woman's face—then she continued. "When I hurt my arm I went to see a lawyer about getting compensation—you see, I can't do anything with this arm—can't even button the baby's pants. That little twist of the fingers hurts too much. Fred had to do all the laundry this week. I have to

*Not her real name.

go to the clinic, too, and that takes carfare. When I told the lawyer how Fred was out of a job—we needed the compensation money and I felt it was due me, he said,

"'Listen, sister, why don't you go over to the relief—they'll help you. You won't get much out of this compensation and it'll be stopping on you soon—relief is steady.'

"I just walked out. I thought—there's no use in talking with this man—he means to be helpful, but he doesn't understand—he doesn't know what people want. People don't want help—they want jobs—what they earn and what's due them. There are some people who don't want to work, but there aren't many. I know because I live along with the people on relief—even though we have been able to keep independent."

Mrs. Nolan sighed and paused. Her slow, brief smile was an acceptance of the social worker's friendly sympathy which she could feel.

"I've been running on, haven't I? You're good to listen. I just had to tell you how I felt—this is different—this isn't like standing in line. Maybe you can even help me get my spirit back. You see, if this had happened last year, I believe I could have figured some way out. I've always held my head up—never told anybody my troubles—and it helped me, too, to go through things. You see, my husband, Fred, is a good man—he couldn't be any better to me and the children. You see he is an only child, too. When we got married he was making good wages—always until last year. Of course, it wasn't easy managing with five babies coming along—but we wanted them, every one. We did not figure that this might happen."

"We planned from the beginning that we would have a family and be a real father and mother to them—keep them healthy and happy—teach them about the world so they could get along—and teach them to love beautiful things too. We do have good children—everyone says they are the best-mannered children in the block. They do well in school, too. I try to help them all I can. Mary has been having trouble with fractions. I've been to the school three times to talk her over with the teacher—she's just about straightened out now.

"It's hard to ask help when you've always gotten along." Mrs. Nolan came back to what she felt was the question in hand. "It's just this—Fred was laid off from his company but he's worked there for many years and they haven't taken him off the list—they promised to take him back as soon as possible, and as soon as my arm gets well I've got a job." Mrs. Nolan proudly drew a letter from her bag and showed it to the worker. It's where I worked last year when Fred was laid off for a little while. I worked as waitress and earned $22 a week, counting tips. See, he said he'd take me back—but now I've got to wait until I can use this old arm." For the first time tears dimmed the blue eyes.

"I guess it's the arm, and Fred seeming more discouraged this time—and my big boy being hurt by a truck this winter. Oh, he's well now, but it frightened me so and he was in the hospital. But," Mrs. Nolan apologized, "I feel better now. You're listening and all, in a way that's private. Your helping us with money for food until we get back to work won't be like I thought. We won't be losing our self-respect—though it will still hurt a

little." Mrs. Nolan looked up questioningly.

The social worker said that the C.O.S. would gladly help in the emergency. She understood how Mrs. Nolan felt about accepting aid, but together they might "figure a way out." The budget was discussed and Mrs. Nolan carefully estimated how much she would need. Plans were next made to talk with Mr. Nolan. Perhaps the C.O.S. could help him in his search for work—and help Mrs. Nolan with her compensation case.

"It's wonderful how things still work out for good, even in these times," said Mrs. Nolan with a sigh of relief as she rose to go. "I see by the sign on your office door you call this office 'The Institute of Family Service of the C.O.S.' That's a good name for it's more than just a relief place. A great load is off my heart since we talked and I want to thank you."

▽

THE LATCHSTRING

(Continued from page 160)

will readily understand how it has come to pass that this particular man has risen to the place of outstanding leadership which he holds in the churches of his own city and of his own country.

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The Playground. The activities going on just south of the church building are preliminary to the construction there of a playground and recreational area. A stone wall is to be erected running from the church south to 120th Street and on 120th Street to the Union Seminary Gymnasium. The corner lot, where the tennis courts have been, will be laid out as a hard surface playground for teen-age boys from the neighborhood and this general section of the city, where outdoor basketball, softball games, and other similar activities can be carried on. They will be allowed to use it on schedule and under leadership without respect to their connection with The Riverside Church or any of its organizations. A one-story building in general architectural conformity to the Cloister will be erected along the Riverside Drive wall facing toward Claremont Avenue. Storage space for playground equipment, wash rooms, and two good-sized class rooms for the Nursery School and other uses will be available in the building. The grass plot will be landscaped a bit and playground equipment for the smaller children will be provided there. It is expected the work will be completed by early fall.

▽

PRAYER

(Continued from page 153)

Cross Thou the inner thresholds where the spoken prayer of one man in the great congregation cannot go and where even the knowledge of our best friends fails. Lo, how alone we are though we be in a great company! How solitary is the soul in its innermost difficulties! There do Thou quietly invade our lives, Spirit of the Eternal, Who hast watched the struggles of Thy children through so many ages that Thou must understand them. And not according to our prayer but according to our need steady and strengthen, comfort and assuage our souls. Build foundations under us so that when the rains descend and the floods come and the winds blow we may not fall, because we are founded on a rock.

We pray in the Spirit of Christ. Amen.

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RELIGION IN SUMMER

Most of the activities promoted by the church are over until October and many of us will be practically unchurched during the summer months. If this means that we cease to tap the spiritual resources of the world and that our religion ceases to function in our living, this summer vacation from church is a serious matter.

Religion is not primarily a church affair at all. The weakness of the church is that too often it has so little first-hand religious experience upon which to build. Whether our vacations are long or short, whether we go or stay, there are open to all of us channels through which we may find renewal and growth in spirit as well as in body and mind. All nature is ready to minister to our needs and to enrich our experience in manifold ways. Its beauties and harmonies, its marvels and immensities may make us aware that we live in a holy place, that God is and is not far away.

Traveling in strange places and among strange people, revisiting old homes and friends, or merely having time to be human, we may come to a deeper understanding of the mystery of life and of the privileges of fellowship which we neglect because, as we shamelessly admit, we are too busy with lesser things.

There may be time to read the books of which we have read reviews, about which we have heard people speak, and to which lecturers have referred as though everyone would understand. There may be time to wonder and reflect, to feel one's self a part of the march of significant movements, to glimpse the thrilling fellowship that characterizes life on the frontiers of our changing world.

C. I. H.

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